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ODES AND OTHER POEMS

BY WILLIAM WATSON

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ODES

AND OTHER POEMS BY

WILLIAM WATSON

43602

LONDON: JOHN LANE, VIGO ST.
NEW YORK: MACMILLAN & CO.
1895

Fourth Edition

Edinburgh: T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty

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ODES

TO RICHARD HOLT HUTTON

YES, I have had my griefs; and yet
I think that when I shake off life's annoy,
I shall, in my last hour, forget
All things that were not joy.

Have I not watched the starry throngs
Dance, and the soul of April break in bud?
Have I not taken Schubert's songs
Into my brain and blood?

I have seen the morn one laugh of gold;
I have known a mind that was a match for Fate;
I have wondered what the heavens can hold
Than simplest love more great.

And not uncrowned with honours ran
My days, and not without a boast shall end!
For I was Shakespeare's countryman;
And wert not thou my friend?

TO H. D. TRAILL

TRAILL, at whose board 'tis good to sit,
And take no thought of hours that flit
Fledged with the tongues of bard and wit—
(Though none, or few,
The latter title may befit
So well as you)—

'Tis now a twelve-months' space and more
Since feet of mine have sought your door,
There where one fancies London's roar
Long leagues away,

And Thames an old-time-haunted shore
Keeps to this day.

For I, with course 'twere hard to trace,
Have southward, northward, set my face,
Coy to the vast and vague embrace
Of London's arms,
The siren's all-too liberal grace
And venal charms.

Daily on matron, man, and maid,
The dome of Wren hath cast its shade,
But I beyond its beck have strayed
By land and sea;
And you a hundred *mots* have made
Unheard by me!

The loser I. Yet mine some gain
From vagrant hours of sun and rain
And steps that still by mount or plain
Carried a mind
To one thing constant, as the vane
Is to the wind—

The service of that mistress hard
To whom a fixed and sole regard
Your vowed and dedicated bard
Dares not refuse,
Would he at last the least reward
Win from his Muse.

For still we rhymers, great or small,
Must gather, would we live at all,

Such casual manna as may fall,
A niggard meed,
On mortals whom the immortals call
But seldom feed.

And so, perhaps with fond pretence
That to the force of sheer, immense,
Importunate lyric opulence
Our lays are due,
We publish all our soul for pence—
Ay me, how few!

Happiest and best of singers he,
Who in Art's bondage greatly free,
Can harvest, from all things that be,
Grist for the mill

Whose wheel a copious Castaly
Turns at his will.

Whate'er we know, whate'er we dream,
All things that are, all things that seem,
All that in Nature's Academe
Her graduates learn,
Was Bacon's province, Shakespeare's theme,
Goethe's concern.

The poem, well the poet knows,
In ambush lurks where'er he goes,—
Lisps hidden in each wind that blows,
Laughs in each wave,
Sighs from the bosom of the rose,
Wails from the grave.

And Orphic laws of lute and verse
All the symphonious worlds coerce,
That hour by hour their parts rehearse,
Winds, strings, and reeds,
In this orchestral universe
The Maestro leads.

But though all life and death and birth,
And all the heaven's enzoning girth
Earth, and the waters 'neath the earth,
Are Song's domain,
Nor aught so lowly but is worth
The loftiest strain,—

'Tis from those moods in which Life stands
With feet earth-planted, yet with hands

Stretched toward visionary lands,
Where vapours lift
A moment, and aërial strands
Gleam through the rift,

The poet wins, in hours benign,
At older than the Delphic shrine,
Those intimations faint and fine,
To which belongs
Whatever character divine
Invest his songs.

And could we live more near allied
To cloud and mountain, wind and tide,
Cast this unmeaning coil aside,
And go forth free,

The World our goal, Desire our guide,—
We then might see

Those master moments grow less rare,
And oftener feel that nameless air
Come rumouring from we know not where;
And touch at whiles
Fantastic shores, the fringes fair
Of fairy isles,

And hail the mystic bird that brings
News from the inner courts of things,
The eternal courier-dove whose wings
Are never furled;
And hear the bubbling of the springs
That feed the world.

You smile at this too soaring strain?
Well, in the smile is no disdain;
And if a more terrestrial vein
    Befit my rhyme—
I promise not to soar again,
    At least, this time.

And sooth to say, a humbler end
This verse was meant to serve, O friend:
For since to you I may not wend
    (Such leagues deter
The else not laggard feet), I send
    This messenger;

And bid him tarry not, but flee,
And greet you well where'er you be;

And pray he may not piteously
Faint by the road—
Of good regards for thine and thee
So large his load.

TO ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

In that grave shade august
That round your Eton clings,
To you the centuries must
Be visible corporate things,
And the high Past appear
Affably real and near,
For all its grandiose airs, caught from the mien
of Kings.

The new age stands as yet
Half built against the sky,
Open to every threat
Of storms that clamour by:

Scaffolding veils the walls,
And dim dust floats and falls,
As, moving to and fro, their tasks the masons ply.

But changeless and complete,
Rise unperturbed and vast,
Above our din and heat,
The turrets of the Past,
Mute as that city asleep,
Lulled with enchantments deep,
Far in Arabian dreamland built where all things last.

Who loves not to explore
That palace of Old Time,
Awed by the spires that soar
In ghostly dusk sublime,

And gorgeous-windowed halls,
And leagues of pictured walls,
And dungeons that remember many a crimson crime?

Yet, in those phantom towers
Not thine, not mine, to dwell,
Rapt from the living hours
By some rich lotus-spell;
And if our lute obey
A mode of yesterday,
'Tis that we deem 'twill prove to-morrow's mode as well.

This neighbouring joy and woe—
This present sky and sea—
These men and things we know,
Whose touch we would not flee—

To us, O friend, shall long
Yield aliment of song:
Life as I see it lived is great enough for me.

In high relief against
That reverend silence set,
Wherein your days are fenced
From the world's peevish fret,
There breaks on old Earth's ears
The thunder of new years,
Rousing from ancient dreams the Muse's anchoret.

Well if the coming time,
With loud and strident tongue,
Hush not the sound of rhyme,
Drown not the song half sung,

Ev'n as a dissonant age
Choked with polemic rage
The starriest voice that e'er on English ears hath rung,

And bade her seer a while
Pause and put by the bard,
Till this tormented isle,
With feuds and factions jarred,
Some leisure might regain
To hear the long-pent strain
Re-risen from storm and fire, immortal and unmarred.

TO LICINIUS

HORACE, ODES, II., X.

LICINIUS, wouldst thou wisely steer
The pinnace of thy soul,
Not always trust her without fear
Where deep-sea billows roll;
Nor, to the sheltered beach too near,
Risk shipwreck on the shoal.

Who sees in fortune's golden mean
All his desires comprised,
Midway the cot and court between
Hath well his life devised;

For riches, hath not envied been,
Nor, for their lack, despised.

Most rocks the pine that soars afar,
When leaves are tempest-whirled.
Direst the crash when turrets are
In dusty ruin hurled.
The thunder loveth best to scar
The bright brows of the world.

The steadfast mind, that to the end
Is fortune's victor still,
Hath yet a fear, though Fate befriend,
A hope, though all seem ill.
Jove can at will the winter send,
Or call the spring at will.

Full oft the darkest day may be
Of morrows bright the sire.
His bow not everlastingly
Apollo bends in ire.
At times the silent Muses he
Wakes with his dulcet lyre.

When life's straits roar and hem thee sore,
Be bold; naught else avails.
But when thy canvas swells before
Too proudly prospering gales,
For once be wise with coward's lore,
And timely reef thy sails.

THE FIRST SKYLARK OF SPRING

TWO worlds hast thou to dwell in, Sweet,—
The virginal, untroubled sky,
And this vext region at my feet.—
Alas, but one have I!

To all my songs there clings the shade,
The dulling shade, of mundane care.
They amid mortal mists are made,—
Thine, in immortal air.

My heart is dashed with griefs and fears;
My song comes fluttering, and is gone.

O high above the home of tears,
Eternal Joy, sing on!

Not loftiest bard, of mightiest mind,
Shall ever chant a note so pure,
Till he can cast this earth behind
And breathe in heaven secure.

We sing of Life, with stormy breath
That shakes the lute's distempered string:
We sing of Love, and loveless Death
Takes up the song we sing.

And born in toils of Fate's control,
Insurgent from the womb, we strive
With proud, unmanumitted soul
To burst the golden gyve.

Thy spirit knows nor bounds nor bars;
On thee no shreds of thraldom hang:
Not more enlarged, the morning stars
Their great Te Deum sang.

But I am fettered to the sod,
And but forget my bonds an hour;
In amplitude of dreams a god,
A slave in dearth of power.

And fruitless knowledge clouds my soul,
And fretful ignorance irks it more.
Thou sing'st as if thou knew'st the whole,
And lightly held'st thy lore!

Somewhat as thou, Man once could sing,
In porches of the lucent morn

Ere he had felt his lack of wing,
Or cursed his iron bourn.

The springtime bubbled in his throat,
The sweet sky seemed not far above,
And young and lovesome came the note;—
Ah, thine is Youth and Love!

Thou sing'st of what he knew of old,
And dreamlike from afar recalls;
In flashes of forgotten gold
An orient glory falls.

And as he listens, one by one
Life's utmost splendours blaze more nigh;
Less inaccessible the sun,
Less alien grows the sky.

For thou art native to the spheres,
And of the courts of heaven art free,
And carriest to his temporal ears
News from eternity;

And lead'st him to the dizzy verge,
And lur'st him o'er the dazzling line,
Where mortal and immortal merge,
And human dies divine.

LAKELAND ONCE MORE

REGION separate, sacred, of mere, and of ghyll, and of mountain,
Garrulous, petulant beck, sinister, laughterless tarn;
Haunt of the vagabond feet of my fancy for ever reverting,
Haunt and home of my heart, Cumbrian valleys and fells;
Yours of old was the beauty that rounded my hours with a nimbus,
Touched my youth with bloom, tender and magical light;

You were my earliest passion, and when shall my
fealty falter?
Ah, when Helvellyn is low! ah, when Winander
is dry!
For had I not dwelt where Nature but prattled
familiar language,
Trite the theme and the word, prose of the
hedges and lanes?
Here she spake to my spirit in lofty and resonant
numbers,
Rhythms of epical mood, silences great as her
song.
Time hath scattered his gifts; and Death, he
hath taken his tribute:
East and west have I fared, hitherward, thither-
ward blown;

Watched in jewelled midnight the Mediterranean
twinkling;
Watched, from Como's wave, pinnacled summits
on fire;
Heard the tempest beleaguer the bases of savage
Tantallon;
Heard the thundering tide crash on Devonian
shores:
And fair and stormy fortune my life's little
pinnace hath weathered,
Shattering onsets of joy, shocks of calamity,
borne;
Mine hath been good unstinted, nor niggard my
portion of evil;
Friendships mine and hates, love and a whisper
of fame:

But ever to you I return, O land in the dusk of whose portals
Rustles my Past like leaves, memories brush me as wings,
Meets me my alien phantom, the self that is dead, that is vanished,
Echoes meet me and dreams, shadows that sigh and depart;
And ever, O meres and valleys, an aureole haunts you of roselight,
Glamour of luminous hours, wraith of my passion of old,
And the brows of eternal Helvellyn are flushed with a virginal rapture,
Lit with the glow of my youth, crimsoned with dawn of my day.

DOMINE, QUO VADIS?

DOMINE, QUO VADIS?

A LEGEND OF THE EARLY CHURCH

DARKENING the azure roof of Nero's world,
From smouldering Rome the smoke of ruin curlèd;
And the fierce populace went clamouring—
'These Christian dogs, 'tis they have done this thing!'
So to the wild wolf Hate were sacrificed
The panting, huddled flock whose crime was Christ.

Now Peter lodged in Rome, and rose each morn
Looking to be ere night in sunder torn
By those blind hands that with inebriate zeal
Burned the strong Saints, or broke them on the wheel,
Or flung them to the lions to make mirth
For dames that ruled the lords that ruled the earth.
And unto him, their towering rocky hold,
Repaired those sheep of the Good Shepherd's fold
In whose white fleece as yet no blood or foam
Bare witness to the ravening fangs of Rome.
'More light, more cheap,' they cried, 'we hold our lives
Than chaff the flail or dust the whirlwind drives:

As chaff they are winnowed and as dust are blown;
Nay, they are nought; but priceless is thine own.
Not in yon streaming shambles must thou die;
We counsel, we entreat, we charge thee, fly!'
And Peter answered: 'Nay, my place is here;
Through the dread storm, this ship of Christ I steer.
Blind is the tempest, deaf the roaring tide,
And I, His pilot, at the helm abide.'

Then one stood forth, the flashing of whose soul
Enrayed his presence like an aureole.
Eager he spake; his fellows, ere they heard,
Caught from his eyes the swift and leaping word.

'Let *us*, His vines, be in the wine-press trod,
And poured a beverage for the lips of God;
Or, ground as wheat of His eternal field,
Bread for His table let our bodies yield.
Behold, the Church hath other use for thee;
Thy safety is her own, and thou must flee:
Ours be the glory at her call to die,
But quick and whole God needs His great ally.'
And Peter said: 'Do lords of spear and shield
Thus leave their hosts uncaptained on the field,
And from some mount of prospect watch afar
The havoc of the hurricane of war?
Yet, if He wills it. . . . Nay, my task is plain,—
To serve, and to endure, and to remain.
But weak I stand, and I beseech you all
Urge me no more, lest at a touch I fall.'

There knelt a noble youth at Peter's feet,
And like a viol's strings his voice was sweet.
A suppliant angel might have pleaded so,
Crowned with the splendour of some starry woe.
He said: 'My sire and brethren yesterday
The heathen did with ghastly torments slay.
Pain, like a worm, beneath their feet they trod.
Their souls went up like incense unto God.
An offering richer yet, can Heaven require?
O live, and be my brethren and my sire.'
And Peter answered: 'Son, there is small need
That thou exhort me to the easier deed.
Rather I would that thou and these had lent
Strength to uphold, not shatter, my intent.
Already my resolve is shaken sore.
I pray thee, if thou love me, say no more.'

And even as he spake, he went apart,
Somewhat to hide the brimming of his heart,
Wherein a voice came flitting to and fro,
That now said 'Tarry!' and anon said 'Go!'
And louder every moment, 'Go!' it cried,
And 'Tarry!' to a whisper sank, and died.
And as a leaf when summer is o'erpast
Hangs trembling ere it fall in some chance blast,
So hung his trembling purpose and fell dead;
And he arose, and hurried forth, and fled,
Darkness conniving, through the Capuan Gate,
From all that heaven of love, that hell of hate,
To the Campania glimmering wide and still,
And strove to think he did his Master's will.

But spectral eyes and mocking tongues pursued,
And with vague hands he fought a phantom brood.
Doubts, like a swarm of gnats, o'erhung his flight,
And 'Lord,' he prayed, 'have I not done aright?
Can I not, living, more avail for Thee
Than whelmed in yon red storm of agony?
The tempest, it shall pass, and I remain,
Not from its fiery sickle saved in vain.
Are there no seeds to sow, no desert lands
Waiting the tillage of these eager hands,
That I should beastlike 'neath the butcher fall,
More fruitlessly than oxen from the stall?

Is earth so easeful, is men's hate so sweet,
Are thorns so welcome unto sleepless feet,
Have death and heaven so feeble lures, that I,
Choosing to live, should win rebuke thereby?
Not mine the dread of pain, the lust of bliss!
Master who judgest, have I done amiss?'

Lo, on the darkness brake a wandering ray:
A vision flashed along the Appian Way.
Divinely in the pagan night it shone—
A mournful Face—a Figure hurrying on—
Though haggard and dishevelled, frail and worn,
A King, of David's lineage, crowned with thorn.

'Lord, whither farest?' Peter, wondering, cried.
'To Rome,' said Christ, 'to be re-crucified.'

Into the night the vision ebbed like breath;
And Peter turned, and rushed on Rome and death.

SONNETS, LYRICS, AND MISCELLANEOUS PIECES

VITA NUOVA

LONG hath she slept, forgetful of delight:
At last, at last, the enchanted princess, Earth,
Claimed with a kiss by Spring the adventurer,
In slumber knows the destined lips, and thrilled
Through all the deeps of her unageing heart
With passionate necessity of joy,
Wakens, and yields her loveliness to love.

O ancient streams, O far-descended woods
Full of the fluttering of melodious souls;
O hills and valleys that adorn yourselves
In solemn jubilation; winds and clouds,

Ocean and land in stormy nuptials clasped,
And all exuberant creatures that acclaim
The Earth's divine renewal: lo, I too
With yours would mingle somewhat of glad song.
I too have come through wintry terrors,—yea,
Through tempest and through cataclysm of soul
Have come, and am delivered. Me the Spring,
Me also, dimly with new life hath touched,
And with regenerate hope, the salt of life;
And I would dedicate these thankful tears
To whatsoever Power beneficent,
Veiled though his countenance, undivulged his thought,
Hath led me from the haunted darkness forth
Into the gracious air and vernal morn,
And suffers me to know my spirit a note

Of this great chorus, one with bird and stream
And voiceful mountain,—nay, a string, how jarred
And all but broken! of that lyre of life
Whereon himself, the master harp-player,
Resolving all its mortal dissonance
To one immortal and most perfect strain,
Harps without pause, building with song the world.

March 18, 1893.

THE FRONTIER

AT the hushed brink of twilight,—when, as though
Some solemn journeying phantom paused to lay
An ominous finger on the awestruck day,
Earth holds her breath till that great presence go,—
A moment comes of visionary glow,
Pendulous 'twixt the gold hour and the grey,
Lovelier than these, more eloquent than they
Of memory, foresight, and life's ebb and flow.

So have I known, in some fair woman's face,
While viewless yet was Time's more gross imprint,

The first, faint, hesitant, elusive hint
Of that invasion of the vandal years
Seem deeper beauty than youth's cloudless grace,
Wake subtler dreams, and touch me nigh to tears.

SONNET

I THINK the immortal servants of mankind,
Who, from their graves, watch by how slow degrees
The World-Soul greatens with the centuries,
Mourn most Man's barren levity of mind,
The ear to no grave harmonies inclined,
The witless thirst for false wit's worthless lees,
The laugh mistimed in tragic presences,
The eye to all majestic meanings blind.

O prophets, martyrs, saviours, *ye* were great,
All truth being great to you: ye deemed Man more

Than a dull jest, God's ennui to amuse:
The world, for you, held purport: Life ye wore
Proudly, as Kings their solemn robes of state;
And humbly, as the mightiest monarchs use.

THE PROTEST

BID me no more to other eyes
With wandering worship fare,
And weave my numbers garland-wise
To crown another's hair.
On me no more a mandate lay
Thou wouldst not have me to obey!

Bid me no more to leave unkissed
That rose-wreathed porch of pearl.
Shall I, where'er the winds may list,
Give them my life to whirl?

Perchance too late thou wilt be fain
Thy exile to recall—in vain

Bid me no more from thee depart,
For in thy voice to-day
I hear the tremor of thy heart
Entreating me to stay;
I hear . . . nay, silence tells it best,
O yielded lips, O captive breast!

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

I

By cliff and chine, and hollow-nestling wood
Thrilled with the poignant savour of the sea,
All in the crisp light of a wintry morn,
We walked, my friend and I, preceded still
By one whose silken and voluminous suit,
His courtly ruff, snow-pure 'mid golden tan,
His grandly feathered legs slenderly strong,
The broad and flowing billow of his breast,
His delicate ears and superfine long nose,
With that last triumph, his distinguished tail,
In their collective glory spoke his race
The flower of Collie aristocracy.

Yet, from his traits, how absent that reserve,
That stillness on a base of power, which marks,
In men and mastiffs, the selectly sprung!
For after all, his high-life attributes,
His trick of doing nothing with an air,
His *salon* manners and society smile,
Were but skin-deep, factitious, and you saw
The bustling despot of the mountain flock,
And pastoral dog-of-all-work, underlie
The fashionable modern lady's pet,—
Industrial impulses bereft of scope,
Duty and discipline denied an aim,
Ancestral energy and strenuousness
In graceful trifling frittered all away.
Witness the depth of his concern and zeal
About minutest issues: shall we take

This path or that?—it matters not a straw—
But just a moment unresolved we stand,
And all his personality, from ears
To tip of tail, is interrogative;
And when from pure indifference we decide,
How he vociferates! how he bounds ahead!
With what enthusiasm he ratifies,
Applauds, acclaims our choice 'twixt right and left,
As though some hoary problem over which
The world had puckered immemorial brows,
Were solved at last, and all life launched anew!

These and a thousand tricks and ways and traits
I noted as of Demos at their root,
And foreign to the staid, conservative,

Came-over-with-the-Conqueror type of mind.
And then, his nature, how impressionable,
How quickly moved to Collie mirth or woe,
Elated or dejected at a word!
And how unlike your genuine Vere de Vere's
Frigid, indifferent, half-ignoring glance
At everything outside the sacred pale
Of things De Veres have sanctioned from the Flood,
The unweariable curiosity
And universal open-mindedness
Of that all-testing, all-inquisitive nose!

II

So, to my friend's house, back we strolled; and there—

We loitering in the garden—from her post
Of purview at a window, languidly
A great Angora watched his Collieship,
And throned in monumental calm, surveyed
His effervescence, volatility,
Clamour on slight occasion, fussiness,
Herself immobile, imperturbable,
Like one whose vision seeks the Immanent
Behind these symbols and appearances,
The face within this transitory mask.
And as her eyes with indolent regard
Viewed his upbubblings of ebullient life,
She seemed the Orient Spirit incarnate, lost
In contemplation of the Western Soul!
Ev'n so, methought, the genius of the East,
Reposeful, patient, undemonstrative,

Luxurious, enigmatically sage,
Dispassionately cruel, might look down
On all the fever of the Occident;—
The brooding mother of the unfilial world,
Recumbent on her own antiquity,
Aloof from our mutations and unrest,
Alien to our achievements and desires,
Too proud alike for protest or assent
When new thoughts thunder at her massy door;—
Another brain dreaming another dream,
Another heart recalling other loves,
Too grey and grave for our adventurous hopes,
For our precipitate pleasures too august,
And in majestic taciturnity
Refraining her illimitable scorn.

SONG IN IMITATION OF THE ELIZABETHANS

SWEETEST sweets that time hath rifled,
Live anew on lyric tongue—
Tresses with which Paris trifled,
Lips to Antony's that clung.
These surrender not their rose,
Nor their golden puissance those.

Vain the envious loam that covers
Her of Egypt, her of Troy:
Helen's, Cleopatra's lovers
Still desire them, still enjoy.

Fate but stole: what Song restored:
Vain the aspic, vain the cord.

Idly clanged the sullen portal,
Idly the sepulchral door:
Fame the mighty, Love the immortal,
These than foolish dust are more:
Nor may captive Death refuse
Homage to the conquering Muse.

TO A FRIEND

UNITING ANTIQUARIAN TASTES WITH PROGRESSIVE POLITICS

TRUE lover of the Past, who dost not scorn
To give good heed to what the Future saith,—
Drinking the air of two worlds at a breath,
Thou livest not alone in thoughts outworn,
But ever helpest the new time be born,
Though with a sigh for the old order's death;
As clouds that crown the night that perisheth
Aid in the high solemnities of morn.

Guests of the ages, at To-morrow's door
Why shrink we? The long track behind us lies,

The lamps gleam and the music throbs before,
Bidding us enter: and I count him wise,
Who loves so well Man's noble memories
He needs must love Man's nobler hopes yet more.

AFTER THE TITANS

ENGLAND, in good Victoria's latter reign,
Two potent councillors by turns have led,
Little alike in build of heart or head,
Yet owning this resemblance,—that the twain
Are visibly of Britain's ancient strain,
Sprung of the lineage of her stalwart dead,
Strong souls and massive, such as England bred
In the brave day that cometh not again.

To these succeeds another, newer race,
Men light and slight, on narrower scale designed,

Offspring and image of the change we trace
In art, arms, action, manners, morals, mind,—
The burly oak departing, in its place
The lissom willow, swaying to the wind.

PEACE AND WAR

THE sleek sea, gorged and sated, basking lies ;
The cruel creature fawns and blinks and purrs ;
And almost we forget what fangs are hers,
And trust for once her emerald-golden eyes ;
Though haply on the morrow she shall rise
And summon her infernal ministers,
And charge her everlasting barriers,
With wild white fingers snatching at the skies.

So, betwixt Peace and War, man's life is cast,
Yet hath he dreamed of perfect Peace at last

Shepherding all the nations ev'n as sheep.
The inconstant, moody ocean shall as soon,
At the cold dictates of the bloodless moon,
Swear an eternity of halcyon sleep.

THE IDEAL POPULAR LEADER

HE is one who counts no public toil so hard
As idly glittering pleasures; one controlled
By no mob's haste, nor swayed by gods of gold;
Prizing, not courting, all just men's regard;
With none but Manhood's ancient Order starred,
Nor crowned with titles less august and old
Than human greatness; large-brained, limpid-souled;
Whom dreams can hurry not, nor doubts retard;
Born, nurtured of the People; living still
The People's life; and though their noblest flower,

In nought removed above them, save alone
In loftier virtue, wisdom, courage, power,
The ampler vision, the serener will,
And the fixed mind, to no light dallyings prone.

TO A LADY RECOVERED FROM A DANGEROUS SICKNESS

LIFE plucks thee back as by the golden hair—
Life, who had feigned to let thee go but now.
Wealthy is Death already, and can spare
Ev'n such a prey as thou.

TO ——

FORGET not, brother singer! that though Prose
Can never be too truthful or too wise,
Song is not Truth, not Wisdom, but the rose
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes.

THE RIVALS

MAN'S good and evil angels came to dwell
As housemates, at his board and hearth alway;
One, secret as the night, one, frank as day,
Both lovely, and in puissance matched full well.
Each hourly strove her sleepless foe to quell,
And ever and anon the bright fiend lay
Foiled, and her countenance, racked with sick dismay,
Changed, and its tyrannous beauty masklike fell.

Ah, could man's thought for ever fix and stay
That glimpse of horrors he might quake to tell

'Twere easy, then, the temptress to repel!
But 'neath the glorious mask and brave array
How shall he know thee, leprous witch of hell,
Robed to allure and fanged to rend and slay?

A NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM

GOD save our ancient land,
God bless our noble land,
God save our land!
Yea, from war's pangs and fears,
Plague's tooth and famine's tears,
Ev'n unto latest years
God save our land!

God bless our reigning race!
Truth, honour, wisdom, grace,
Guide their right hand!

Yet, though we love their sway,
England is more than they:
God bless their realm, we pray,
God save our land!

Too long the gulf betwixt
This man and that man fixt
Yawns yet unspanned.
Too long, that some may rest,
Tired millions toil unblest.
God lift our lowliest,
God save our land!

God save our ancient land,
God bless our noble land,
God save our land!

Earth's empires wax and wane,
Man's might is mown as grain:
God's arm our arm sustain!
God save our land!

THE SIXTY-FIVE ELEMENTS

(Written after reading Lord Salisbury's Address at the British Association)

MASTER, I marvel not at all, that these
Mock at the wit that would their meaning seize.
A maiden's sigh—the descant of a bird—
Me with triumphant riddles taunt and tease.

I well believe, despite of all he knows,
The wonder of the sweetness of a rose,
The wonder of the wild heart of a song,
Shall shame man's foolish wisdom to the close.

The secrets of the gods are from of old
Guarded for ever and for ever told,—
Blabbed in all ears, but published in a tongue
Whose purport the gods only can unfold.

A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

IN the blanched night, when all the world lay frore,
And the cold moon, the passionless, looked down
Commiserating man the passion-curst—
Man made in passion and by passion marred—
Through the pale silence, on the New Year's verge,
This prayer fled forth, and trembled up to heaven:—

'O Thou whose dwelling is eternity;
Who seest the hunger and the toil of men,

And how the love of life and wife and babe
Is brother of hate and sire of deeds of death;
Give peace—give peace: peace in our time, O
Lord!

'But if we needs must march to peace through
war,
Spare not the sowers who amid Thy corn
Mingled the lethal seed of this red flower;
The whirlwind let them reap who sow the wind.
Make terrible Thine arm against all thieves
Whether in mart or on imperial throne;
And scatter with Thy thunder the unjust
Who turn thy pleasance to a wilderness,
To battlefields Thy vineyard, with mailed feet
Trampling the joyous vine of life in blood.

'Purge and renew this England, once so fair,
When Arthur's knights were armed with noble-
ness,
Or Alfred's wisdom poised the sacred scales;
Yea, and in later times, when Liberty,
Her crowned and crosiered enemies combating,
Stood proudlier 'stablished by a false king's fall,
Mighty from Milton's pen and Cromwell's sword,
Terribly beauteous, passionately just,
Seared with hell's hate, and in her scars divine.'

New Year's Eve, 1892.

FRANCE

JUNE 25, 1894 *

LIGHT-HEARTED heroine of tragic story!
Nation whom storm on storm of ruining fate
Unruined leaves,—nay, fairer, more elate,
Hungrier for action, more athirst for glory!
World-witching queen, from fiery floods and gory
Rising eternally regenerate,

* The day after the murder of Carnot.

Clothed with great deeds and crowned with
dreams more great
Spacious as Fancy's boundless territory!

Little thou lov'st our island, and perchance
Thou heed'st as little her reluctant praise;
Yet let her, in these dark and bodeful days,
Sinking old hatreds 'neath the sundering
brine,
Immortal and indomitable France,
Marry her tears, her alien tears, to thine.

THE SOVEREIGN POET

He sits above the clang and dust of Time,
With the world's secret trembling on his lip.
He asks not converse nor companionship
In the cold starlight where thou canst not climb.

The undelivered tidings in his breast
Suffer him not to rest.
He sees afar the immemorable throng,
And binds the scattered ages with a song.

The glorious riddle of his rhythmic breath,
His might, his spell, we know not what they be:
We only feel, whate'er he uttereth,
This savours not of death,
This hath a relish of eternity.

MALIGN BEAUTY

A FACE like morning, with a heart of night!
Not though in deserts fanged with death thou roam,
Or couch 'mid monsters of the ooze and foam,
Shalt thou be blasted with so dread a sight
As when a soul whose errand is to blight
And shatter, makes a glorious body its home,
Foul tenant of a stately palace-dome,
Imperial towers, and gardens of delight.

Look through her windows! See,—a pilgrim guest
Is feasted by the bounteous châtelaine.

Fledged are the hours with wine and song and jest.
The morrow cometh. Shall he rise and hie
Forth on his way? He grasps his staff in vain,
In her deep dungeons flung, to rot and die.

TO ONE WHO HAD WRITTEN IN DERISION OF THE BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY

DISMISS not so, with light, hard phrase and cold,
Ev'n if it be but fond imagining,
The hope whereto so passionately cling
The dreaming generations from of old!
Not thus, to luckless men, are tidings told
Of mistress lost, or riches taken wing;
And is eternity a slighter thing,
To have or lose, than kisses or than gold?

Nay, tenderly, if needs thou must, disprove
My loftiest fancy, dash my grand desire·

To see this curtain lift, these clouds retire,
And Truth, a boundless dayspring, blaze above
And round me; and to ask of my dead sire
His pardon for each word that wronged his love.

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE morn broke bright: the thronging people wore
Their best; but in the general face I saw
No touch of veneration or of awe.
Christ's natal day? 'Twas merely one day more
On which the mart agreed to close its door;
A lounging-time by usage and by law
Sanctioned; nor recked they, beyond this, one straw
Of any meaning which for man it bore!

Fated among time's fallen leaves to stray,
We breathe an air that savours of the tomb,

Heavy with dissolution and decay;
Waiting till some new world-emotion rise,
And with the shattering might of the simoom
Sweep clean this dying Past that never dies.

THE WORLD IN ARMOUR

I

UNDER this shade of crimson wings abhorred
That never wholly leaves the sky serene,—
While Vengeance sleeps a sleep so light, between
Dominions that acclaim Thee overlord,—
Sadly the blast of Thy tremendous word,
Whate'er its mystic purport may have been,
Echoes across the ages, Nazarene:
Not to bring peace Mine errand, but a sword.

For lo, Thy world uprises and lies down
In armour, and its Peace is War, in all

Save the great death that weaves War's dreadful
crown ;
War unennobled by heroic pain,
War where none triumph, none sublimely fall,
War that sits smiling, with the eyes of Cain.

II

WHEN London's Plague, that day by day enrolled
His thousands dead, nor deigned his rage to abate
Till grass was green in silent Bishopsgate,
Had come and passed like thunder,—still, 'tis told,
The monster, driven to earth, in hovels old
And haunts obscure, though dormant, lingered late,
Till the dread Fire, one roaring wave of fate,
Rose, and swept clean his last retreat and hold.

In Europe live the dregs of Plague to-day,
Dregs of full many an ancient Plague and dire,

Old wrongs, old lies of ages blind and cruel.
What if alone the world-war's world-wide fire
Can purge the ambushed pestilence away?
Yet woe to him that idly lights the fuel!

III

A MOMENT'S fantasy, the vision came
Of Europe dipped in fiery death, and so
Mounting re-born, with vestal limbs aglow,
Splendid and fragrant from her bath of flame.
It fleeted; and a phantom without name,
Sightless, dismembered, terrible, said: 'Lo,
I am that ravished Europe men shall know
After the morn of blood and night of shame.'

The spectre passed, and I beheld alone
The Europe of the present, as she stands,

Powerless from terror of her own vast power,
Neath novel stars, beside a brink unknown;
And round her the sad Kings, with sleepless hands,
Piling the fagots, hour by doomful hour.

TO AUBREY DE VERE

POET, whose grave and strenuous lyre is still
For Truth and Duty strung; whose art eschews
The lighter graces of the softer Muse,
Disdainful of mere craftsman's idle skill:
Yours is a soul from visionary hill
Watching and hearkening for ethereal news,
Looking beyond life's storms and death's cold dews
To habitations of the eternal will.

Not mine your mystic creed; not mine, in prayer
And worship, at the ensanguined Cross to kneel;

But when I mark your faith how pure and fair,
How based on love, on passion for man's weal,
My mind, half envying what it cannot share,
Reveres the reverence which it cannot feel.

WRITTEN IN A COPY OF MR. STEVENSON'S 'CATRIONA'

GLORIOUS Sir Walter, Shakespeare's brother-brain,
Fortune's invincible victor-victim, Scott,
Mere lettered fame, 'tis said, esteeming not,
Save as it ministered to weightier gain,
Had yet his roseate dream, though dreamed in vain;
The dream, that, crowning his terrestrial lot,
A race of great and splendid heirs, begot
Of his own loins, o'er Abbotsford should reign.

Fate spurned his wish, but promised, in amends,
One mighty scion of his heart and mind:

And where far isles the languid ocean fleck,—
Flying the cold kiss of our northern wind,—
Lo the rare spirit through whom we hail as friends
The immortal Highland maid and Alan
Breck!

43602

TELL ME NOT NOW

TELL me not now, if love for love
Thou canst return,—
Now while around us and above
Day's flambeaux burn.
Not in clear noon, with speech as clear,
Thy heart avow,
For every gossip wind to hear;
Tell me not now!

Tell me not now the tidings sweet,
The news divine;
A little longer at thy feet
Leave me to pine.

I would not have the gadding bird
Hear from his bough;
Nay, though I famish for a word,
Tell me not now!

But when deep trances of delight
All Nature seal,
When round the world the arms of Night
Caressing steal,
When rose to dreaming rose says, '*Dear, Dearest*,'—and when
Heaven sighs her secret in earth's ear,
Ah, tell me then!

NIGHT ON CURBAR EDGE

No echo of man's life pursues my ears;
Nothing disputes this Desolation's reign;
Change comes not, this dread temple to profane,
Where time by æons reckons, not by years.
Its patient form one crag, sole stranded, rears,
Type of whate'er is destined to remain
While yon still host encamped on night's waste plain
Keeps armèd watch, a million quivering spears.

Hushed are the wild and wing'd lives of the moor;
The sleeping sheep nestle 'neath ruined wall,

Or unhewn stones in random concourse hurled:

Solitude, sleepless, listens at Fate's door;

And there is built and 'stablisht over all

Tremendous silence, older than the world.

THE SAINT AND THE SATYR*

SAINT ANTHONY the eremite
He wandered in the wold,
And there he saw a hoofèd wight
That blew his hands for cold.

'What dost thou here in misery,
That better far wert dead?'
The eremite Saint Anthony
Unto the Satyr said.

'Lorn in the wold,' the thing replied,
'I sit and make my moan,

* Mediæval legend.

For all the gods I loved have died,
And I am left alone.

'Silent in Paphos Venus sleeps,
And Jove on Ida mute;
And every living creature weeps
Pan and his perished flute.

'The Faun, his laughing heart is broke
The nymph, her fountain fails;
And driven from out the hollow oak
The Hamadryad wails.

'A God more beautiful than mine
Hath conquered mine, they say.—
Ah, to that fair young God of thine,
For me I pray thee pray!'

LINES WRITTEN IN RICHMOND PARK

LADY, were you but here!
The Autumn flames away,
And pensive in the antlered shade I stray.
The Autumn flames away, his end is near.
I linger where deposed and fall'n he lies,
Prankt in his last poor tattered braveries,
And think what brightness would enhance
the Day,
Lady, were you but here.
Though hushed the woodlands, though sedate
the skies,
Though dank the leaves and sere,

The storèd sunlight in your hair and eyes
Would vernalise
November, and renew the agèd year,
Lady! were you but here.

A RIDDLE OF THE THAMES

AT windows that from Westminster
Look southward to the Lollard's Tower,
She sat, my lovely friend. A blur
Of gilded mist,—('twas morn's first hour,)–
Made vague the world: and in the gleam
Shivered the half-awakened stream.

Through tinted vapour looming large,
Ambiguous shapes obscurely rode.
She gazed where many a laden barge
Like some dim-moving saurian showed.
And 'midst them, lo! two swans appeared,
And proudly up the river steered.

Two stately swans! What did they there?
Whence came they? Whither would
they go?
Think of them,—things so faultless fair,—
'Mid the black shipping down below!
On through the rose and gold they passed,
And melted in the morn at last.

Ah, can it be, that they had come
Where Thames in sullied glory flows
Fugitive rebels, tired of some
Secluded lake's ornate repose,
Eager to taste the life that pours
Its muddier wave 'twixt mightier
shores?

We ne'er shall know: our wonderment
No barren certitude shall mar.
They left behind them, as they went,
A dream than knowledge ampler far;
And from our world they sailed away
Into some visionary day.

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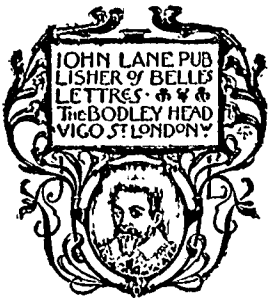

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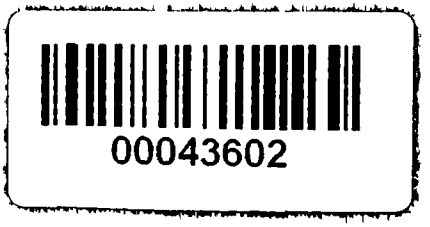
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